



### **The High Permeability of Pragmatic Gated Communities in High Density Hong Kong: The Planning influence and Social Implications**

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Hong Kong is renowned for its high density but orderly built environment. The housing form of Hong Kong is dominated by high rises organized into well-defined housing estates. It is argued that this type of residential organization is one form of gated communities (GCs), and unlike GCs in the Western cities, they proliferate because of pragmatism. It is also argued that spatial segregation is a lesser problem because most of the GCs in Hong Kong are accessible by the public without gating or fencing around their boundaries, that there is public transport weaving through the GCs, and that the retail properties commonly found in larger GCs welcome outside patrons. This paper aims to explain whether the pragmatism and the high permeability of Hong Kong's GCs are corollaries of planning and design policies and practices, and whether pragmatism and high permeability facilitate safety and social inclusion. The conceptual backdrop of this paper is based on the discourse in the GC literature and that on social sustainability in residential neighbourhoods. The planning and design of the Hong Kong's GCs will be evaluated against the common practices of GCs as discussed in the literature, aiming to identify the distinctive practices in Hong Kong's GCs and to explain their pragmatism and high permeability. On the social impacts, safety is interpreted as sense of security and informal social control in the housing estates, while social inclusion as universal access to public facilities and services, and willingness of residents to accept others, especially outsiders. Planning and design policies and practices of the GCs related to these four issues will be examined. A spectrum of eight housing estates of different sources (public and private), location (main urban area and new towns), price range (medium- and high-priced private housing) and degree of gatedness constitute the case studies. This paper argues that in order to address the problems of land scarcity and low housing space standards and to fulfill the social and economic objectives, the planning and design of GCs in Hong Kong foster permeable, safe and inclusive residential communities in the high-density housing estates.